

Dear <Salutation>,

I'm sorry for writing to you today out of the blue. But I hope you'll keep reading and that, by the time you finish this letter, you'll understand why I'm getting in touch.

My name is Siobhán Tighe. On the 12th September 2008, I was lucky enough to marry a man called Peter, the love of my life and the best father our three boys could have asked for.

I'm even sorrier it's not Peter writing; he would have been great at it. He was good at almost anything he turned his hand to – sport, cooking, dancing, gardening and the rest – he was wonderfully creative. And Christmas, he was so good at Christmas - more on that later.

Sadly, he's not here to write to you; cancer took him from me and our three boys 4 years ago. He was 43 years old. And our boys, Ronan, Dillon and Lorcan were just 11, 8 and 6 when he died.

And so it's up to me to let you know the difference the support of wonderful members of the ARC community like you made in Peter's four-year cancer battle. Not just for him but for me and our boys, too.

You see, throughout those four challenging years, that support was so important to us. <As someone who's experienced cancer, you already know how much it takes to stay positive. Especially if you're on the receiving end of bad news.>

That's how it was for Peter, it was never good news - treatment after treatment, intravenous chemo, oral chemo, radiation, stoma surgery, more chemo, more radiation, infections, temperatures and vomiting; it was relentless. Yet Peter remained positive;

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he held on to hope right up to the very end. We all did. We just needed one treatment to work.

The support you made possible was vital to giving us the strength to stay positive, to hold onto hope. And that's the reason I'm sharing our story today. Because I know the difference your support made to our family.

That's what's given me the courage to write to you today. Because if sharing our story can help give even one family the support we received, then it's worth it.

Any donation you can send to ARC this Christmas to help support a family through one of the most difficult times in their life will make a difference.

I don't know how we'd have coped without ARC. How I'd have coped. When Peter was first diagnosed, I felt like I'd taken a kick to the stomach. It was terrifying. If you've ever been through it, you'll understand what I mean.

For the first few weeks, I didn't know what to do. I kept busy looking after Peter and the boys. I kept pushing my fear and sadness away. I didn't want to upset Peter with my feelings; he was already dealing with so much.

It was my friend Joanne, who'd been supported by ARC through breast cancer, who suggested I talk to them.

I will never forget the warmth and support I got on my first day at the ARC Cancer Support Centre on South Circular Road. I was invited to a quiet area where I shared our story with a lovely member of the ARC team.

That's when the floodgates opened and everything I'd been holding in through those first few weeks just poured out of me.

In that moment, I knew I didn't have to protect anyone's feelings. I could just let go and begin to process my own emotions.

Through ARC, I was able to access counselling and treatments like reflexology, which provided a lifeline for me at a time when I was trying to be strong for everyone else.

It wasn't just me; Peter found comfort in ARC, too, through counselling and acupuncture. I truly believe the support he received sustained Peter and gave him the strength to keep going for as long as he did.

But the thing I'm most thankful for is what the ARC community made possible for our boys. We told them Daddy was sick, but he was getting treatment and we were really hoping he'd get better.

But we were completely overwhelmed. Helping kids navigate something as big and life-changing as cancer is just so challenging. ARC has a beautiful programme called CLIMB, which stands for Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery. And I'm so grateful our beautiful, brave boys got to take part in it.

Through art and play, CLIMB helped the boys better understand and express their feelings. It helped them voice their fears and meet other children whose families were in a similar situation.

"Mammy, I feel so much better after that chat." He looked visibly lighter, like a weight had been lifted off him. It gave me hope that we were going to be ok.

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Now they're older, the boys are all keen to help other children get the same support. Lorcan's class recently held a fundraiser selling baked goods and even copies of a special superhero comic Lorcan had made for ARC.

He told me:

"When I needed help coping with Daddy's passing away, ARC helped. I want other children who have people they love with cancer in their lives to get the same help as me."

Your support this Christmas will help grant Lorcan's wish and help other children like him to get the professional support they need at a really difficult and confusing time in their lives.

The boys, like all kids, are very excited for Christmas. But of course, there will always be someone missing from our Christmas, and there's an understandable sadness that comes with that.

As I mentioned earlier, Peter was really good at Christmas. But our last Christmas together was probably the best. It was during COVID, so it was just the five of us.

That Christmas Eve, the boys all got into their matching pyjamas and we snuggled up in the sitting room to watch The Muppets Christmas Carol. The next Christmas morning, as usual, we all lined up by age and headed downstairs to see if Santa had come. Sticking with tradition Peter went in first to turn on the tree lights, true to form he pretended Santa hadn't come. The boys loved that.

We had a fry and after, while the boys played with their toys, Peter and I got stuck-in making dinner. It was a lovely, slow-

moving, relaxed day. Having that time together, the laughter, the joy, the memories it meant and still means so much.

This will be our fifth Christmas without Peter; we miss him terribly, his kindness, his good humour, his cooking. But keeping these family traditions alive makes it feel like part of him is here with us.

The joy and happiness we shared on that final Christmas together wouldn't have been possible without the support of people like you. People whose kindness and compassion touch the lives of families like ours every day.

That's why I hope you'll support another family like ours this Christmas. A family on a really tough journey. A family whose journey may end in a positive outcome for their loved one.

Or a family like mine, who will need support to find a way to continue without someone they love.

It was a Monday when doctors told Peter that there were no more treatments, no more hope. He was gone within days. It was as if, as soon as the hope died, Peter did too. We were shattered.

Peter and I had been through so much in our 21 years together, but the most difficult thing I've ever been through was losing him.

And now he's not here, it's up to me to make sure our boys get all the support and guidance they need to build happy, successful lives. To help them grow up to be the kind of man their father was.

It's been difficult to support the boys' grief while dealing with my own. But through ARC, the boys and I have access to

counselling and other supports we've needed. Support that will benefit the boys for the rest of their lives.

It's still painful, and I wish we hadn't had to go through it. But I know that it would have been even harder for us to get through the years since Peter's death without the support made possible by the kind and compassionate people who help ARC to be there for families like mine.

Right now, a family is on the same journey we've been on, and I know how much they need your support.

So this Christmas, in Peter's memory, I'm asking you to send what you can, whether it's €25 or €250. Thank you so much for everything you do and for taking the time to read our story.

Wishing you and yours a happy and joy-filled Christmas,

Siobhán, Ronan, Dillon & Lorcan Tigh

Siobhán, Ronan, Dillon and Lorcan
In memory of Peter

P.S. <Salutation>, Peter's cancer diagnosis changed our family forever. Thank you for making sure we weren't alone on what has been a really difficult journey. My greatest wish this Christmas is that you will help give another family the love and support you've given mine.

P.P.S. Lorcan has made a very special Christmas decoration for you. It's his way of showing the difference the kind people who support ARC's work have made in his life. And I'm sure you'll agree the strength and resilience our three boys have shown is the stuff super heroes are made of.